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City of Duluth Communications Office

Mayor Emily Larson

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DATE: 9/13/2022

SUBJECT: Chief Buffalo Celebration: mural unveiling, feast, and public forum event

BY: Kelli Latuska, Public Information Officer

CHIEF BUFFALO CELEBRATION: MURAL UNVEILING, FEAST, AND PUBLIC FORUM EVENT

DULUTH, MN – The Chief Buffalo Memorial Mural project began as a pilot project in 2019, and gradually grew into something bigger than any of the organizers could have ever imagined. The murals are now set for completion in September of 2022, and an unveiling is scheduled in Gichi-Ode Akiing park (formerly Lake Place Park) along the Lake Walk from 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 14. There will be a feast consisting of fry bread tacos with vegan options, as well as an opportunity for the community to meet the project's lead artists and connect with the city's Indigenous Commission. The event is hosted by the mural artists, All Nations Indigenous Center, and AIM Twin Ports Support Group, in partnership with members of the Duluth Indigenous Commission. An intro and keynote speech on decolonization will be provided by Rick Defoe.

The artwork installed is a continuation of the murals started back in the Fall of 2019, when the artists and community came together to recreate a pictograph that Chief Buffalo used (among others) on his journey to meet the President of the United States in 1854. The mural project began shortly after the Duluth Indigenous Commission renamed Lake Place Park- Gichi ode'Akiing (A Grand Heart Place). The Indigenous Commission, among other things, listed remembering Chief Buffalo as a goal for the newly renamed park. Moira Villard and Kassie Helgeson from the Duluth Indigenous Commission began contacting descendants of Chief Buffalo and, with their guidance, began the Chief Buffalo Memorial Project.

Since 2019 there have been multiple community painting sessions, where volunteers and passersby have been invited to design artwork for the walls - over an estimated 200 individuals have contributed to painting the murals and creating work for the site, with 4 Ojibwe artists taking the lead in designing and coordinating the most prominent walls. Those artists are Moira Villiard (Fond du Lac Ojibwe descendant), Michelle Defoe (Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe), Awanigiizhik Bruce (Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe), and Sylvia Houle (Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe). Additional help by Mana Bear Bolton and Conor Fairbanks was recruited for the creation of maps.

The artwork includes maps of regional treaty territories, references to Chief Buffalo's travels and the Sandy Lake tragedy, as well as visuals of Ojibwe florals, folklore, and cosmology. Additionally some murals depict contemporary Indigenous people engaging with the land (based on photos taken by Ivy Vainio).

"I feel strongly that it's important to celebrate and represent those who are living today, as much as we honor those who lived before. Especially in Indigenous communities, we have so few contemporary representations across the board," says Villiard, lead artist and project director. "It's been exciting to create a space that embodies multiple different approaches and timeframes in the context of our collective history."

Chief Buffalo's famous journey to Washington D.C. took place as a response to what is known as the Sandy Lake Tragedy, an strategic effort by leadership in Minnesota territory to bring harm to Ojibwe communities through a Removal Order. The Order directly resulted in the deaths of over 300 Ojibwe people.

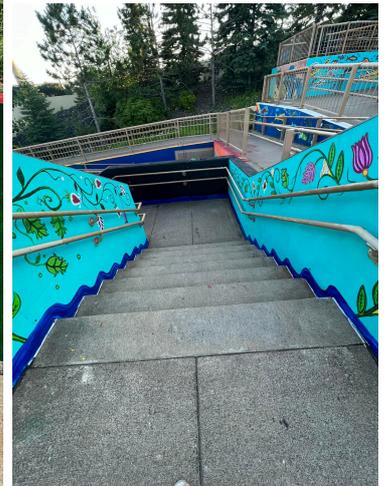
Chief Buffalo traveled this journey at 90 years old with a small team by canoe and train to Washington D.C., all to request that the Removal Order be rescinded, to rally support, and to implement the Treaty of 1854, which resulted in the creation of multiple reservations, assured tribal rights to hunting and fishing, and essentially established the grounds for Duluth and other cities in the region to exist on what would become ceded territories. Duluth may not have existed had this journey not taken place, and so it's a story that's relevant to people from all backgrounds in our community.

"The treaty was not a grant of rights to the Indians, but a grant of rights from them -- a reservation of those not granted." US v. Winans (1905).

Collaborators: This project is a collaboration between project manager and artist Moira Villiard alongside lead artists Michelle Defoe, Awanagiizhik Bruce, and Sylvia Houle, the City of Duluth Indigenous Commission, Zeitgeist Center for Arts, AIM Twin Ports Support Group, and descendants of Chief Buffalo, with sponsorship and funding by individual donors, the American Indian Community Housing Organization (through Bush Foundation and Arts Midwest), Duluth Art Institute (through the St. Paul and Minneapolis Foundation), the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council (through legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund), the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, and the IOBY Artists Lead program.



mural in progress 1



mural in progress--steps





mural in progress 2

mural in progress 3



CHIEF BUFFALO CELEBRATION: MURAL UNVEILING | FEAST & FORUM

PRESENTED BY THE DULUTH INDIGENOUS COMMISSION

Wednesday, September 14
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Gichi-Odé Akiing Park



Welcome and Intro : Rick Defoe
Food : Indian Tacos (w/vegan option)
This event is free and open to the public, please see QR code for powwow etiquette.



Chief Buffalo Mural lead artists and Indigenous Commissioners will be in attendance, answering questions about the Chief Buffalo Memorial project as well as work being done to increase Indigenous visibility in our community.

Metered parking available at North Lake Ave Parking Lot, or on Superior St. (the blocks east of Lake Ave) near the downtown Lake Walk entrances.

EVENT SPONSORS:



- Duluth Indigenous Commission
- All Nations Indigenous Center
- AIM Twin Ports Support Group

Celebration poster graphic